

July 11, 2016

The Honorable
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Full House:

The American Farm Bureau Federation urges you to support legislation to establish national policy concerning the labeling of food products that contain ingredients grown using genetic modification. Passage is of the utmost urgency to pre-empt Vermont's labeling mandate and avoid the development of a state-by-state patchwork that would impede commerce, hinder agricultural and food production advancements, and increase consumers' food costs.

On July 7, 2016, the Senate passed 63-30 GMO labeling legislation negotiated between Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts and Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow. This follows the great work of the House when it passed H.R. 1599 nearly a year ago. AFBF continues to have concerns about the labeling mandate contained in that compromise and would prefer a voluntary, national labeling standard. We maintain that labeling should not be required unless it is for health and safety reasons, and as numerous, peer-reviewed studies have shown, genetically modified foods pose no risks to human health.

However, the negative consequences of the Vermont law for farmers, food companies and consumers, as well as the potential for more states to adopt similar laws, call for national uniformity through federal legislation. It is also important to us that the Department of Agriculture will craft the labeling and disclosure regulations. Farm Bureau will certainly weigh in as those regulations are developed to ensure that information provided to consumers is accurate and educational, and that farmers continue to have access to important technologies that are critical to feeding our nation and the world.

We recognize that supporting the GMO labeling compromise may be a difficult decision for you. It was for us. However, the bill offers the opportunity to address this issue and provide national leadership to resolve this policy matter in a timely manner. America's farmers have made great strides thanks to ongoing developments in agricultural technology, including genetically modified seeds that allow them to use less pesticides, sequester carbon in the soil and reduce erosion through less plowing, and increase their crop yields. New biotech traits promise benefits to consumers, such as fruits and vegetables that stay fresh longer and help families save money. And biotechnology offers our best opportunity to fight emerging plant pests and diseases. It is vital that we maintain a strong market for the products of biotechnology, which in turn encourage continued investment in the development of new technologies that help us grow more food, on existing land, using fewer inputs while improving productivity.

Please support America's farmers and our ability to remain productive and efficient in agriculture, through the use of modern agricultural technology, by supporting the bipartisan Roberts-Stabenow GMO labeling proposal (S. 764).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Zippy Duvall", is written over a light gray circular background.

Zippy Duvall
President
American Farm Bureau Federation